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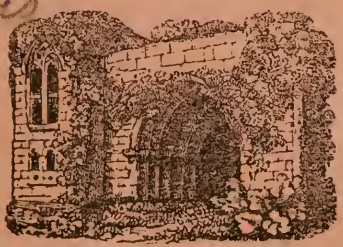
DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

BY THE

NORTHMEN.

Fourth Edition.



NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY W. MOLINEUX, CORNER OF ANN AND NASSAU-STREETS.

A

LECTURE

ON

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

BY

THE NORTHMEN,

FIVE HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE COLUMBUS,

DELIVERED IN NEW YORK,

AND IN THE OTHER CITIES OF THE STATE, ALSO IN SOME OF THE FIRST SEMINARIES.

BY A. DAVIS,

FORMERLY CHAPLAIN OF THE SENATE, ETC. OF NEW YORK.

FOURTH EDITION,
WITH ADDITIONS.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL COLMAN,

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W. MOLINEUX, PRINTER,
CORNER OF ANN AND NASSAU STREETS.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

Extract of a Letter from Prof. Willoughby, President of the Medical College, Fairfield, N. Y. to G. W. Card, M. D., Ohio.

"Mr. Davis is lecturing on History, and gave last evening to the citizens here, and to the students of both institutions, a most eloquent and interesting lecture on the antiquity of our country, and the utmost certainty of the discovery thereof before the days of Columbus—to my mind the evidence is conclusive."

From Drs. Coventry and Goodsell, distinguished Physicians of Utica.

"Mr. Davis has delivered the lecture which is noticed above to a large audience in this city. We the undersigned, who were present at its delivery, take great pleasure in expressing our own gratification and in stating our belief that all his auditors were highly pleased. The Lecture is instructive and interesting."

From Mrs. Willard of Troy.

"Mr. Davis has delivered an interesting and instructive lecture, relating to the history of our country, to the members of the Troy Fem. Seminary."

The Commercial of Buffalo, Jan. 23,

After speaking of the lecture, "On the discovery of the Northmen," says, "we have perused it somewhat hastily and find it abounding with historical facts of a very interesting nature, compiled with much care and labor and adorned with that poetry of thought so indispensible when published in the form of a book."

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE generous patronage received for the delivery of the following Lecture leads to its publication. Though faint the ray of knowledge it may impart, yet I trust it will still be seen and its benefits rewarded while exhibited in a different medium.

The sale of three editions, in a few months, shows that this hope of success has not been disappointed. The fourth is presented with improvements.

Together with original matter, the lecture is a compilation from some of the most popular periodicals of the day. To collect and arrange facts from various sources—"hoc opus, hic labor est." The history of the Northmen by Hon. Mr. Wheaton, and the splendid work on American Antiquities, published last year in Denmark, have also been consulted.

LECTURE.

While the beauties of the visible creation fade on the eye—while all nature reposes under the mantle of night, it is pleasant to leave the haunts of business for the lecture room, and to survey the dark regions of the past under the light of history.

That curiosity which is attracted by theories, not because they are new, but because they are based in *truth*, is the first and last principle of a great and noble mind. It is this which induces the traveller to cross the turbulent ocean—to scale lofty mountains, and to sit down as on the brink of volcanoes. It is this, which leads the naturalist to survey the works of creation, where he sees that all things *reflect* the perfections of Deity; yes even the violet, fresh from the sleep of winter, tells him that there is a God, and that he is great and good. And it is curiosity that causes the historian to inquire *when* and *whence* was this mighty continent peopled?

That America was peopled by those in advance of the savage state long before any authentic accounts are given of settlements, is manifest from nameless monuments of antiquity found in various parts.

The ruins of a city in Central America are among the most striking of such. This city, called Palenque, lies two hundred and forty miles from Tabasco—lat. about 15°. N.

It will be recollected that the avaricious Spaniards discovered and conquered Mexico on the north, and Peru and Chili on the south of Central America, in the first place; but, at length the solitude of the latter was broken, and there was discovered the El Dorado, about which the whole Spanish nation had so long been dreaming. It was found, not above, but beneath the surface of the earth—not on the wide and flowry plain; but under a forest of huge trees. And there were discovered not such buildings as those erected by the Druids, of rough and mis-shapen stones; but such as those in which kings dwell—built of *hewn* stone.

The appearance of these ruins shows that a nation once existed there highly skilled in the mechanic arts, and in a state of civilization far beyond any thing that we have been led to believe of the aborigines, previous to the time of Columbus.

A distinguished antiquary of New York has received from this city a beautiful specimen of the fine arts—an idol of pure gold.

This city has emphatically been called the Thebes of America. In surveying its ruins, the traveller is led to believe that it was founded at as early a period as the renowned cities of Egypt.

How immense this city! It is supposed to have been sixty miles in circumference, and that it contained a population of nearly three millions. Great were its commercial privileges—even now, the broad and beautiful Otulum rolls along its desolated borders.

Palenque, lying about one thousand miles from Mexico, and being elevated five thousand feet above the ocean, enjoyed a climate almost unequalled for its pleasantness. The natural beauty of the scenery was unrivalled—the soil rich and fertile beyond any other portion of the globe.

One of the principal structures revealed to the eye of the antiquarian is the teoculi or temple. Its style of architecture resembles the Gothic. It is rude, massive, and durable. Though resembling the Egyptian edifices, yet this and the other buildings are peculiar, and are different from all others hitherto known.

The entrance to this temple is on the east side by a portico more than one hundred feet in length, and nine feet broad. The rectangular pillars of the portico have their architraves adorned with stucco work of shields and other devices. This temple stands on an elevation of sixty feet. Would that its exalted location and its splendor were indicative of elevated and enlarged views its worshippers might have had of the Supreme Being; but certain objects or relievos, lead to the supposition that within its massive walls human beings were sacrificed to incensed divinities. Amid this wilderness of ruins are now to be seen fourteen large stone buildings with many of their apartments in good condition.

The antiqulty of this city is manifest not only from its nameless hieroglyphics and other objects; but from the age of some of the trees growing over buildings where once the hum of industry and the voice of merriment were heard. Two hundred natives were employed by the Spaniards in felling the trees and in consuming them by fire. The work was executed in about twenty days.

The concentric circles of some of these trees were counted, which showed that they were more than nine hundred years of age.

Lord Kingsboro' thinks that the inhabitants of this city of the desert were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. One of the facts on which this theory is based is, that the temple resembles that of Solomon. His opinion is evidently erroneous, from the fact that the people of Palenque are different from all others in those distinguishing characteristics which have ever been assumed as the criteria of distinct species of men. The physical structure of this people, as well as various characteristics, lead to the supposition that they are not derived from any *known* pre-existent people;

As yet, we must ask in vain, who were the founders of these cities of the dead? Alas! their names have faded into oblivion. The remembrance of their deeds remains not even in tradition or legendary song.

I am indebted to the politenes of the editors of those invaluable periodicals the Knickerbocker and the New-York Review, for the figure of the Palenciam head and the cuts that represent the inscription on the "Dighton Rock."

Shade of Spurzheim! tell if thou canst what qualities such a formed head as this implies.

This helmet is said to resemble those described by Homer.

Oh! that some mighty genius like that of Belzoni would arise and remove from this city of the world called *new*, the veil that conceals its origin.*

It is supposed that this city was destroyed by some internal convulsion, or like those of the south of Europe, was overwhelmed by barbarians of the north. Such it is said were of Celtic origin.

It is not singular that it should have been concealed from view for ages, when we recollect that cities of the eastern continent have, in like manner, remained in oblivion till of late. We allude to the ruins of Pestum in Campania of Italy, and to those of Petra of Idumea in Asia. A new forest hid for centuries, the former from the degenerate sons of Rome, while the splendid structures of Petra were known only to Bedouins for over a thousand years. Who does not delight to read about the roses of Pestum? Yet they still unfold their inimitable petals amid the ruins of palaces and beside dilapidated temples.

Do we admire the boundless forests, the lofty mountains, and the majestic rivers of our hemisphere? The vast wilderness of ruins, once enlivened by intelligent beings, should demand a higher claim to our admiration.

The antiquities of America stretch from the great lakes of the north and west to central America, and the southern parts of Peru on the south; from

* As the celebrated traveller J. L. Stephens, Esq. is appointed Minister to Guatimala, it is his intention to visit Palenque.

the Allegany mountains on the east, to the Rocky mountains on the west; and even from the Pacific to the Atlantic ocean.

We will not say as the Athenians said of their nation, that the first inhabitants of America were created when the sun was first lit up in the sky; but we must presume they early reached this continent from the old world.

The learned Dr. Clarke says that the continents were once united, but that by the force of winds and waves the isthmuses were broken up and formed into islands along the coasts. Easy however is the transition from the east to the west by the way of Bhering's straits when we consider that they are only thirteen leagues wide.

Adverse winds also might have driven the frail vessels of the ancients to the region lying on the gulf of Mexico and elsewhere.

But as the tropical animals found in America could not have crossed over by Bhering's straits when frozen, it is said they must have come by land that once extended from Asia to America in the torrid zone. Hence the course taken by the Palencians in coming from the plains of Shinar. It is evident that they must have come to Central America immediately after the flood, before any orders of architecture were invented, otherwise they would have introduced such into their new city.

The traces of different races of men, now extinct, are to be found in America, as the dwarfish and the giant. The graves of the former, four and a half feet long, are seen in Georgia, and the bones of the latter farther north—some of the thigh bones are two or three inches longer than those of the present inhabitants—craniums are found large enough to cover the head of the observer. And is it strange it should have been said in the Sacred Volume? "And there were giants in those days."

It is thought that the ancestors of the present race of Indians are of Tartar origin, who came to this continent by the way of the Fox Islands about A. D. 600.

The eyes of mankind from the time of Pythagoras have been turned to the west in anticipation that here new discoveries were to be made and hither were the adventurous at length led.

And who was the first among known discoverers? Who are not ready to answer, Columbus?

A different answer might surprise some. One is given in the name of the NORTHMEN. It is asserted that Leif, a Northman, was the first who discovered the country south of Greenland, unless we except Newfoundland.

Biarne sailed from Norway, directed by the stars, for Greenland; but being driven by the winds for several days to the south, he saw an island—probably Newfoundland.

The discovery of America by the Northmen excites a vast deal of curiosity. And is it not a laudable curiosity that leads one to ascertain what white men first trod regions in which the modest wild flower wasted its sweetness on the desert air?

As Geography is one of the eyes of history, it would be well at this time to direct the attention to the map of North America, and to those of Massachusetts and Rhode Island in particular.

The Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians in Copenhagen have lately published an important work. While the contents of this massive work are invaluable, its mechanical execution reflects great honor on the society that published it.

This work is called, as translated from the Latin, "American Antiquities, or northern writings of things in America before the time of Columbus."

The determination was formed about ten years since by the Royal Society of Antiquarians in Copenhagen to publish the authorities on which these accounts rest in the original documents, accompanied with full commentaries and illustrations. The *text* is in the Icelandic tongue.

The inquiry is often made, who were the Northmen? They were the descendants of the Scandinavians, who it is thought sprang from the Thracians mentioned by Homer—a nation now extinct. The Northmen lived in Denmark and Norway. Their literature has been compared in extent to the literary remains of Greece and Latium. This opens a new fountain of research, where the scholar may often

"Return and linger, linger and return."

This great work contains two Icelandic documents now for the *first* time published accurately in a complete form, purporting to be histories written by or for persons who discovered and visited the North American coast early in the eleventh century, confirmed and illustrated by extracts from no less than fifteen other original manuscripts, in which the facts set forth in these histories are either mentioned or alluded to. The Royal Society have already collected two thousand sagas or works of Scandinavian or Icelandic history.

In this work in particular is found Adam Bremen's account of the discovery of America, communicated to him in the eleventh century by Sweyn Estrithson, king of Denmark.

1st. Are these documents genuine?

2d. If so, why have they not been heard of before?

The work itself contains evidences of the antiquity and authenticity of the manuscripts from which the publication has been made, sufficient to raise them above any just suspicion.

These documents, as Professor Rafn says, have been known to Icelandic scholars, but these have been so few, comparatively, and the means of these few so limited, that they have not been able to give them suitable examination, much less to be at the expense of publishing them.

How long did the ancient classics, for instance, lay concealed in the monasteries of Europe for the want of some one to exhibit them to public view? These Icelandic documents may have been hid in like manner in the libra-

ries of priests. And we may say that the Society of Antiquarians in Copenhagen, in bringing these documents to light, resembles the conduct of the poet Laureate, Petrarch, in the fourteenth century, who at his own expense, had the valuable manuscripts of antiquity dragged from the dust of the cloisters, transcribed and exhibited to the world.

Who does not admire the lovely scenery, where the beautiful and sublime are blended, displayed in the succession of falls at Trenton? Yet these were concealed for ages, till a master-spirit revealed them to an admiring world! And does not the raven wing of night hide the works of art also till disclosed in a similar way? The learned of Iceland, though like the generality of poets, were poor, yet they were not disposed, like Milton, to sell their manuscripts for a paltry sum.

It is well known the Norwegians have long claimed the honor of discovering and colonizing America before the time of Columbus.

Instead of this discovery being a new fangled theory, as some say, there have been several works published in Europe, upwards of a century, which speak of these facts. One of these was printed at the university of Oxford, in 1716.

Iceland appears to have been a medium of communication between Norway and Greenland—a stepping-stone, as it were, from one continent to another.

Iceland, thought by some to be the "Ultima Thule" of Virgil, was discovered by the Norwegians in 861. The oppression of king Harold Harfaga drove them there for an asylum.

But the restless spirit of the Northmen would not allow them to be idle. They made incursions in every direction, and discovered Greenland in 984.

In 986, a colony was begun by Eric, the red. This was at length destroyed. By the exertions of the Danish Society, the ruins of this settlement have been discovered. It was located on the west, near Cape Farwell. It is seen in the remains of churches and buildings.

Leif, the son of Eric, commenced a voyage of discovery in the year 1000. His crew consisted of thirty-five men.*

After sailing for some time south west, they made land—they anchored and went ashore. This place was destitute of grass, and was covered with a slaty rock which they called Helluland. This is supposed to be Labrador. Fishermen of the present day will give a like description of that barren region.

From thence they sailed southwardly, and after holding on for some time, they again made land and went ashore. This country was level, had a low coast, presenting here and there bluffs of white sand, and was thickly covered with wood. This they named Markland, or Woodland. This is thought to be Nova Scotia.

* Lief was the first to introduce missionaries into Greenland.

Leaving Markland, they sailed south westerly with a fair wind two days before seeing land again, when they passed down a promontory, probably the east side of Cape Cod, stretching east and north, and then turning west between an island (Martha's Vineyard) and the main land, they entered a bay, (Narragansett Bay,) through which a river flowed, (Taunton River,) when they came to anchor and went ashore. Resolving to spend the winter here, they called the place Leifsbuthir, or place of booths. Here finding grapes very plenty, they called the place Vineland or Wineland the good. This land, to those coming from the remote north, appeared as nature in the "world's first spring."

Early in the season they returned to Greenland. Leif's return became the principal subject of conversation.

The next adventurer was Thorwald, his brother. And you will observe that he and the other navigators gave the same account of places they visited. Were not this the case, who could believe any of their reports?

Thorwald, thinking the country had not been sufficiently explored, set sail in 1002, and proceeded to Leifsbuthir, where he lived till 1004.

In the spring of 1004, he sailed from Leifsbuthir, after passing along the shore of the promontory east and north, they sailed round a sharp point of land called Kjarlanes. This must have been Cape Cod. Kjarlanes implies *Keelcape*. For Cape Cod, at the extremity, is in shape of the keel of ancient vessels, which curved *inward*.

It is supposed Thorwald was killed by the natives, near Plymouth.

In 1006, Thorfins, or Thorfin, commanded one of the three ships that came from Iceland to Greenland. He was of royal lineage.

In the spring of 1007, Thorfin, with three ships and one hundred and sixty men, besides cattle and all necessary materials for establishing a colony, set sail for vineland.

They sailed to Helluland or Labrador; from thence to Markland or Nova Scotia; and from thence to Kjarlanes, or Cape Cod. Sailing south by the east side of the promontory, which terminated at Kjarlanes, they passed along beaches or trackless dsèrts of sand. How descriptive of this bleak and sterile coast.

Those who have sailed from Boston to Narragansett Bay, are ready to say, that I am not drawing an ideal picture.

Continuing their course, they arrived at an island between which and the main land a stream appeared to pass. They called it Shaumey. This is supposed to be Martha's Vineyard. Nine men went away in one of the ships and never returned. It is said they were driven on the coast of Ireland where they were seized as slaves.

In the spring, Thorfin and one hundred and fifty-one others went to the main land. They called the place Hop, the residence afterwards of king Philip. Here they found large numbers of skrellings or natives. Thorfin carried on a traffic with them by exchanging bits of colored cloth for furs. In consequence of their frequent attacks, in 1009, they returned to Green-

land. Then it will be recollected that the Northmen had not the use of fire-arms, with which to defend themselves against the assaults of the savages. These lords of the wilds had a rude kind of engine by which they hurled large stones against their foes; and it is possible that the white man would never have driven the red man from the Atlantic to the Rocky mountains, but for the invention of gun-powder.

I cannot forbear to speak of the valor of one of this crew of the Northmen, a female. When all the rest were disposed to flee before the savage foe, she exclaimed, "If I only had a weapon, I ween I could fight better than any of you." Ah, when we consider the patriotism of the females at the siege of Carthage, when they cut their locks to make ropes for engines of war, and when we recollect the courage of Isabella, of Castile, who at the conquest of Granada, though in ill health, led on her veterans to conquest and glory, have we not reason to suppose that this Scandinavian was sincere in her declaration? Truly, *valor* and *benevolence* are but parallel streams in the female heart. We would not applaud courage, however, unless under the control of a higher and holier principle.

Thorfin married Gudrida, the widow of Thorstein, third son of Eric. She accompanied her husband to Vineland. Snorre, their son, was the first white child born in America. From him descended the distinguished associate of Professor Rafn—Finn Magnusen. The great sculptor Thorwaldsen, now in Europe, is also of this family. Bishop Thulack Rudolfson was a descendant of Thorfin's, and it is supposed that he wrote or compiled these documents.

While some of the Northmen went as far as Florida, I have spoken only of those who visited Vineland.

Thorfin, the most distinguished of these, returned to Iceland, where he ended his days, living in great splendor.

The editor of the American antiquities, Professor Rafn, and his associate, Professor Finn Magnusen, think that Vineland was situated in the east port of Rhode Island, and in the south part of Massachusetts, on and about Narrgansett Bay and Taunton River.

The points in the Icelandic documents alluding to the locality of Vineland may be reckoned the Geography, Natural History, Astronomical Phenomena and vestiges of residence of Northmen in that place. All of these, in the opinion of the editor of the American Antiquities, point to the head of Narragansett Bay as the locality of Hop, the central part of Vineland.

As the Royal Society have held correspondence with several learned societies in this country for some years, they are well qualified to form a judgment on this subject.

The following letter from the late General Holstein, Professor in "Albany Female Academy," will show the care taken to acquire information relative to American Antiquaties.

"In proof of the great exertions made by the Northern Antiquarian Society in Copenhagen, to acquire a knowledge of Scandinavian Antiquities in

America, I hereby state that several years since, a letter of inquiry, sealed with the seal of the society, was sent to a professional gentleman of Geneva, in this state—a translation of which I made from the Danish tongue."

The Geography of Vineland.—Concerning the situation of Helluland, there can be no doubt, as it was the first land south west of Greenland. Where else could this have been, unless the coast of Labrador?

Markland was situated south west from Helluland, three days sail, or three hundred and sixty English miles. This is supposed to be Nova Scotia.

The distance of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick agrees with the account the Icelanders gave of Markland.

Vineland was situated two days sail, or about two hundred and forty English miles to the south west of Markland, and if Markland has been properly located, must be sought in or near the south part of Massachusetts.

In the Icelandic documents it is said that Hop, the residence of Thorfin, was situated on an elevation of land, near a river which flowed south through a bay into the ocean. From this the land stretched east, and turning north, formed a promontory which terminated in a point or cape which they call Kjarlanes. The east side of the promontory was bounded by long narrow beaches or sand hills. To those, who like myself, have often viewed the Atlantic from these *sand hills*, this account appears peculiarly striking.

The Natural History of Vinland.—Vinland was remarkable for its vines, maple trees, maize, and a great variety of wild animals. The waters abounded with fish, and were occasionally visited with whales. Birds were numerous. The eider duck was seen about the islands in large numbers.

As to vines, they are said to be numerous now, and this is more particularly true of the country around Narrangansett Bay. It is said the grapes are so numerous between Taunton and Providence, as to almost choke up the places where they grow. And was not an island called Martha's Vineyard, on account of the multiplicity of vines growing there?

The celebrated Bishop Berkley, who attempted to establish a theological seminary in Rhode Island, says in his letter to his friends in Europe, that vines were as plenty on the island as in Italy. Gosnald who visited the Elizabeth Isles in 1603, says that vines were in great profusion there.

In the documents it is said, that in that region are the red, sugar and bird's eye maple. The Northmen cut down the trees and after they were dry, they loaded their ships with the timber. It is supposed that the bird's eye variety was made an article of commerce.

As to Indian corn or maize, it seems our pilgrim fathers found some, in what is now called Truro, near the end of the Cape. It was buried in the earth.

Deer still roam wild in the pine woods near Plymouth.

It is needless to remind the reader of the multiplicity of fish that still abound in the waters of this region. The sportsman may, at this day, tell his friends in the language of Capt. Smith, of Jamestown, who described this quarter, "of the pleasure to be derived from angling and crossing the sweet air, from isle to isle, over the silent streams of a calm sea."

As to whales, I have occasionally seen them spouting around the sandy shores of the Cape.

In regard to the eider duck, in the documents it is said still to inhabit these parts. In the Latin translation it is called, "anas mollisima," a duck with the finest of feathers. Wild foul must have been numerous there, as an island is still called Egg Island from the quantity of eggs they deposited.

THORFIN DESCRIBES THE SOIL AND CLIMATE:—The winters of Vineland are said to be remarkably mild, but little snow falling, and cattle subsisting out of doors through the winter.

This account does not agree with the description of New England winters at this time. Still however, it has been the practice of the farmers on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, to let their sheep and cattle lie out during the winter But the cold winters of New England, compared with those of Greenland, are as the mildness of spring.

But there have been great changes in the face of the earth, and in the climate, in different ages. Change is the law of nature. Has not one of the bright cluster been blotted out of the map of heaven? Such change also takes place on the face of the earth.

The Dead Sea was, in earlier times, sixty miles long—it is now only thirty. And even old Ontario, has receded from her former bounds, leaving to the present generation a rich tract of land, several miles wide, and a beautiful ridge road. Who does not admire the everlasting rocks, rising in stern grandeur, on either side of the Mohawk at the Little Falls? Yet, the lovely vale above, must once have been the bed of a vast lake. This is manifest from the fact, that there are "pot holes" found at an elevation of sixty feet above the river, at these Falls.

These circular excavations were made, ages since, by the *circumvolution* of stones, driven by the rapid descent of the waters. You can see a *demonstration* of this fact by looking at the High Falls of the Black River, or Trenton.

I have a specimen of Gneiss, broken from one of these holes, which though worn by the busy hand of old time, is as smooth as if polished by the lapidary.

And what a mighty labor was that, for the waters of this lake to have found their way, *gradually*, through the high and continuous wall of Granite, where now the Mohawk murmurs as it rolls along its new channel.

And how has the face of the earth changed in Massachusetts since visited by the Scandinavians? For instance, at the extremity of the Cape called Kjarlanes, I have seen, amid wide waves of sand, innumerable

stumps of trees. So that where *now* is comparatively a desert of sand, and one as bleak as that of Sahara, once stood a dense forest. As the ocean is constantly encroaching on these barren shores, Government is expending large sums to prevent its ravages by planting beach grass.

One circumstance forces itself on my mind that may not be improper to name.

I do not find that there is any mention in these documents of there being masses of sand at Kjarlanes. As it is said, the east side of the promontory was bounded by long narrow beaches or sand hills, and from the remains of a forest of which I spake, at the extremity of this Cape, is it unreasonable to suppose it stood there in the days of the first voyagers?

Geological facts prove that it was much warmer formerly in the north than it is now.

For instance, we find from the skeleton of the elephant, found in Siberia, that this tropical animal once roamed there.

That amid the bogs in Ireland, in Lapland, and in the marshy parts of North America, where it is too cold now for forests to appear, they once flourished. In Scotland also are to be found the remains of oak trees. It is too cold at present for them to grow there.

The following observations from the work of Hugh Williamson, M. D., on Climate, politely handed me by Professor Greene, of Albany, concur with the above views.

It is not to be disputed that in former ages Iceland produced timber in abundance. Large trees are occasionally found there in the marshes and vallies that have been found to a considerable depth in the ground. Segments of these fossil trees have lately been exported in proof of the alleged fact.

It is asserted in the ancient Icelandic records, that when Ingulf, the Norwegian first landed in Iceland, 879, he found so thick a cluster of birch trees, that he penetrated them with difficulty.

Henderson in his Travels in Iceland says that the climate has deteriorated there from the fact that it was once shaded with forests.

When the first Norwegian colony settled in Greenland, about 1000 years ago, they found no difficulty from ice in approaching the coast, and a regular correspondence was supported by their people for many years.

And has not climate changed even in this region? A gentleman of Mount Morris says, that forty years ago, the winters were so mild in the Genessee Valley, that one could plough, and that swine lived through them in the woods. And is it unreasonable to suppose that the climate of New England was much milder in the days of the Northmen than it is now?

The learned editor and his associate, deduce from the Astronomical data, lat. 41° 24' 10" which is the latitude of Narragansett Bay and Mount Hope. There, at the winter solstice, December 22d, the day is nine hours.

That the Northmen were capable of taking latitudes is evident from the circumstance, that at that period they speak of eclipses which have lately

been calculated by Sir David Brewster, and the distinguished Norwegian Astronomer Hanstein, and found correct.

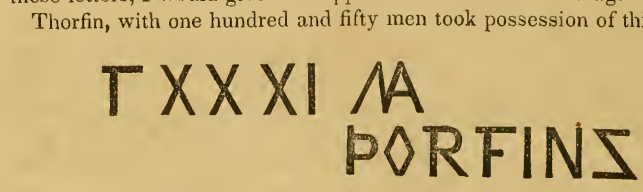
The reading, however, that leads to the above calculation has been disputed. The whole controversy turns on the meaning of two words. From what we can understand, we presume the editor is correct in his exposition.

But suppose we were to reject all history on account of some *apparent* or *real* discrepency in narration? In such a case, some future reader might declare that the History of the American Revolution was neither credible nor authentic; for it is said that the distinguished battle of the 17th June, '75, was fought on Bunker's Hill instead of Breed's. Who does not know that Bunker's hill, rising back of Breed's, is *more elevated* than the latter on which the monument is rising? I know not why Breed's Hill is called Bunker's unless on account of the greater harmony in the pronunciation of the latter, or that they proposed raising fortifications in the first place on Bunker's Hill.

LITTLE CAN BE SAID OF THE VESTIGES OF THE RESIDENCE OF THE NORTHMEN IN THIS COUNTRY.

There is a large rock at the junction of Smith's Creek with Taunton River, with a singular inscription on it. It was evidently made with an *iron* instrument. Passing over the particular remarks of the editor, on these letters, I would give his supposition as to their meaning.

Thorfin, with one hundred and fifty men took possession of this country.



Where you see the character in the first line is the figure of a man; and where the first character stands in the second line it is supposed T H was once made.

Professor Rafn has deciphered an inscription on the Paradisic rock of Iceland, which he says, proves beyond doubt the European origin of the inscription on this in Massachusetts.

Instead of Mr. Catlin's having seen like inscriptions on white quartz rocks at the west, I am told on the best authority that he says he has not seen such there.

The antiquary to whom I before alluded, and who takes a deep interest in these things, says that he has visited "Vinland," and finds the places mentioned in the documents identified. He has taken a copy of the above inscription from the rock itself.

While there are various similiar inscriptions in the vicinity of Mt. Hope, there is one in particular on a rock in the town of Kent, Connecticut, that on comparing it with the figures on Dighton rock, leads to the belief, that it was made by the Northmen.

The people in the north of Europe were fond of making inscriptions on rocks on the borders of lakes and rivers; for such are found in Norway, Sweden, and Scotland. They are called "runes."

One of these inscriptions found on a rock in Sweden, has been deciphered by Professor Finn Magnusen. The inscription relates to a battle fought about A. D. 680 between the kings of Norway and Sweden. Accounts of this battle were given by authentic historians.

As the monuments of antiquity in North America are different from those in Mexico, Central and South America, they must have been left by different races. It is said there is a similiarity between the antiquities of North America and those found in the North of Europe.

If the fabled Atalantis of Plato once lay west of Europe, might not the descendants of Japhet have passed to this continent by the way of Atalantis and Newfoundland as well as by Iceland?

Were the Northmen capable of making discoveries and of recording them? The rude children of our forests could not perform a work so mighty.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, spake of the invasion of the people of the north, before the Christian era. He says of the Cimbri, that they were not a small tribe, but mighty in fame; that the vestiges of their ancient glory, still remained in their fortifications; that no other nation had so often given them cause to dread their arms—not the Carthagenians, or Spaniards, or Gauls.

In later times, the Northmen made incursions upon Germany, France, England the Orkney, Farroe and Shetland Isles.

The French were in such fear of the Northmen, that they inserted in their Liturgy, A furore Normanorum, libera nos, O Domine!

In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Danes, or Northmen, invaded or took part of England, and seated one of their favorite princes, Canute on the throne of Alfred.

They were a daring people—the sea was their home—the mountain wave was the scene of their sport—far and wide did they wander without compass to guide.

Their vessels were built of timber that is now eagerly sought by the first maritime nation of the earth.

A people, some of whose leaders boasted of never having slept by a cottage fire, became the dread of Christendom. They ruled the waters from the Arctic ocean, to the Azores—they passed between the pillars of Hercules—they ravaged the coasts of Spain and France—sacked the cities of Tuscany—drove the Saracens from Sicily. They desolated the classic fields of Greece—penetrated the walls of Constantinople. Yes, in rescuing the Holy Sepulchre, they led the van of the chivalry of Europe. Mark their valor and their success. For one hundred Northmen knights with one aid, or squire each, drove ten thousand Saracens from Sicily.

Scott gives a beautiful description of this remarkable people, in speaking of the Western Isles.

"Thither came in times afar,
Stern Lochlin's sons of roving war;
The Northmen, trained to fire and blood,
Skilled to prepare the raven's food;
Kings of the main, their leaders brave,
Their barks the *dragons* of the wave."*

Seest thou the tiny fleet of some school boy, launched on an insulated sheet of water? And such were the greatest armaments of the famous nations of antiquity, compared with those of the Northmen.

The present illustrious queen of England is a direct descendant of the Northmen. It will be recollected that Rollo, the Norman, invaded France, in 912, and enthroned himself in the north. In 1066, William of Normandy, conquered England. These sovereigns were Northmen, and from their family the pride and glory of Great Britain descended.

At the beginning of the eleventh century, the Danes and Norwegians were converted to Christianity, and thereby received a new impulse, that led them to extend the blessings of the Gospel. And who, but this people, could ever have established missions in Greenland?

What shall we say of the *ability* of the Northmen, to record incidents of their voyage.

In the year 1000, on their conversion to Christianity, they adopted the Roman alphabet. This was their Augustan age. The thirst of the Icelanders for learning, is seen in the conduct of Ulfigot, their supreme legislator, who, in 925, undertook a voyage to Norway, in his sixtieth year, to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the legal customs and institutions of the parent country.

In Iceland, the learned were called Skalds and Sagamen.

The former were poets and historians. Skalds denote "Smoothers or polishers of language."

The Sagamen recited in prose, with greater detail, what the Skalds had recited in verse.

By the recitations of the Skalds, the real and traditionary history of the country was transmitted from generation to generation.

Memory, is perhaps the most improvable faculty of our nature. Deprived of books, it depends upon its own resources. Its strength is seen in the following instance: An Icelandic Skald, sang sixty different lays in one evening before King Harold Sigurdson, and being asked if he knew any more, declared that these were only the half of what he could sing.

Their traditionary histories were written down and preserved.

As poetry is among the antiquities of all nations, the events it records have ever been preserved by the recitations of Skalds, Minstrels, or Bards.

*In describing king Harold's ship it is said—"And dragons' heads adorn the prow of gold."

And whom does the conqueror of Wales cut off from the land? Does not Edward the First, of England, destroy the minstrels of Wales, lest they should, by their recitations, awaken that spirit of liberty in the breast of the vanquished, which would lead them to throw off the yoke of the British monarch?

These Skalds were distinguished men—the companions of kings. They were sometimes kings, as in the instance of Regnar Loldbrok.

The Sagamen made their recitations in public and private, at convenient opportunities.

If Augustus delighted to have Virgil and Horace on either hand, so the Scandinavian monarchs rejoiced to have Skalds and Sagamen in their presence.

At solemn feasts, the services of these men were required.

Sæmund, in 1056, collected the different poems relating to the mythology and history of the north. The collection was called the "Poetic Edda." He was a man of learning, having been educated at the universities of Germany and France.

He performed for the ancient poems, the same office which is said to have been done by the ancient Greek rhapsodist, who first collected and arranged the songs of his predecessors, and reduced them to one continuous poem, called Homer's Iliad.

Snorre Sturslon, judge of Iceland, was the most distinguished scholar of his day. His principal work was the Prosaic Edda. It treats, in particular of Scandinavian mythology. He lived in 1178. His bath still attracts the attention of the traveller. The aqueduct of it is five hundred feet long, and is composed of hewn stone, finely united by cement. The reservoir is similarly constructed, and will contain thirty persons. The water was supplied from one of their warm springs.

The general characteristics of the Icelandic tongue, are copiousness, energy, and flexibity, to an extent that rivals every modern language and which enables it to enter into successful competition with the Greek and Latin.

Were not the Icelanders then *capable* of recording the events incident to a voyage of discovery?

The *internal* evidences found in these documents, are in favor of their authenticity.

Besides, there are in existence a series of works from the time when these voyages purport to have been made, down to the present time, which have been preserved, and which make mention of these discoveries.

Distinguished men, who have had superior opportunities of ascertaining the merits of this question, have come to the conclusion, that the descendants of the Scandinavians were the discoverers of America, prior to the time of Columbus. Among these are Forster, Wheaton, and Baron Von Humboldt.

I know not that any of the Northmen returned to this part of the continent to live.

It is said, Bishop Eric came to Vinland, in 1121, and that the Icelanders visited Nova Scotia in 1347.

It is supposed that while Thorfin returned to Iceland, his men formed colonies in this region. Although driven away at first from Vinland by the natives; yet it is possible they might have returned to this quarter and left evidences of their arts in the antiquities I shall name hereafter.

There are evidences that New England and this country were inhabited by a race superior to those found by our forefathers in 1620.

In proof of this, I would mention some things that came under my own observation. I shall be excused for introducing them, as they are *connected* with the place where the Northmen sojourned.

How fond is man to linger around mouldering ruins—to fix the eye on the mutilated column, overgrown with ivy; but are there not antiquities as worthy as those of art? I mean those of our own species.

I shall make a remark on a human skeleton I saw, not long since, at Fall River, in the vicinity of Narragansett Bay.

I stopped at Pocasset House. You observe they use Indian names in Massachusetts as well as in New York. How striking the remarks of Professor Hitchcock, in the Geology of Massachusetts, when he declaims against the uncouth names given to some of its mountains. He would prefer the harmony of Indian names.

I had an extensive view of the region around Mount Hope, lying on the west of Narragansett Bay. How accurately is the scenery portrayed in the Icelandic documents!

In the Museum, next door, was the skeleton of one as illustrious as the son of Massasoit. It will be recollected that he was a distinguished chief; a firm friend of the pilgrims at Plymouth. He had two sons, Alexander and Philip. The latter was killed in a piece of woods near Fall River. Beautiful is the situation of Mount Hope. On passing it lately, the place where Philip's house stood, was pointed out. Mount Hope has become a place of resort for those who wish to inhale a pure air, and to witness some of the most attractive scenery our country presents.

This skeleton was dug up, a few years since, in that place. It has a breast plate or medal hanging from its neck. thirteen inches long, and six in width at the top, and five at the bottom. It has also, an ornament of fillet work around its body, four and a half inches wide. These ornaments are made of brass. A knowledge of the uses of this *artificial* metal, implies a considerable advance in the arts.

I witnessed lately an object of interest in this state.

Not long since, a large oak tree cut down in Lyons, was taken to Newark, and on sawing it, there were found, near the centre, the marks of an axe. On counting the concentric circles, it was discovered, that four hundred and sixty had been formed since the cutting was made.

But the most striking circumstance is, that this large cavity, now visible, was made, by an *edged* tool. The rude stone axes of the present race of Indians could never have made clefts so smooth as those I saw in the block at the Hotel in Newark.

A clergyman of Cummington, Massachusetts told me he saw a like cut in a hemlock of that place. Since made by an *edged* tool, three hundred and twenty-two circles had been formed.

I have seen a similar cutting made in an oak tree at Lockport, probably 300 years since. I examined also a piece of burnt brick taken from beneath an oak tree 2 feet 10 inches diameter, at the ruins of a fortification in Wisconsin.

Such objects as these, shew that the light of knowledge was lit up here long before the time of Columbus. And by whom this was done, and by whom it was blown out, possibly some future antiquaries can tell.

An important inquiry arises. Was Columbus aware of the discoveries by the Northmen?

From a letter preserved by his son, it appears that he visited Iceland in 1477. And it is thought by some, that he *there* obtained a knowledge of the discovery of Vinland. Allowing this to be the case, it is singular he should never have given any informations of such knowledge.

Instead of *walking* through Spain, leading his son by the hand, would he not at once have rushed into the presence of the sovereigns, and acquired patronage, wealth and honor, by telling them that the obscure Icelanders had discovered the region he wished to unfold?

His greatest enemies never accused him of having reached the new world by information received from Iceland.

After all, let not the circumstance of this prior discovery cause, in our view, the laurels given to Columbus to wither on his brow. Let us ever honor him for his perseverence and his virtues.

Let not Leif, and his associate Northmen, deprive him of what the *voice* of nations has awarded, the merit of having given, not to Ferdinand and Isabella only, but to successive generations a new world.

Iceland, though but a speck on the bosom of the northern ocean, is not unworthy our notice. Though dark to the superficial observer; yet it shines with a lustre, brighter than the flame rising from its volcano. It is the light of knowledge. That obscure island is remarkable for the attention paid to learning. Even many among the common class pursue the higher branches of study. Their long nights are enlivened by the custom of *every* member of the family gathering around the bright lamp, while one reads for the amusement and instruction of all.

The sources of happiness are not like those of mighty rivers hid from the view of most people—they are accessible to all The Icelanders living in a remote island, and cut off from privileges that milder climates present, are naturally led to look for happiness in the pursuit of knowledge.

If the celebrated Pliny could say his books were sovereign consolers of sorrow, cannot the Icelander also declare, that when mountain waves lash the shores, he can find pleasure in the pursuit of those studies that mend the heart and enlighten the mind? Ah, yes, fondness for books will create an artificial summer in the depths of the most gloomy season.

The sunny Italy may boast of the beauteous tints that flush her skies; but after all, her effeminate inhabitants may be destitute of that happiness enjoyed by those who live where winter reigns uncontrolled most of the year.

The benevolence of Deity is seen in the *contentedness* felt by those who live in the higher latitudes, where, as a writer said of countries north of the Alps, nature seems to have acted the part of step-mother.

What a contrast between the condition of the Icelanders and that of their forefathers. They were the worshippers of the god Wodin. And what were his attributes? He was styled the Father of Carnage! His greatest favorites were such as destroyed most of their fellow-creatures in the field of battle.

But the Prince of Peace has broken the sceptre of the Father of Carnage.

And here where the Northmen found those who heard the Great Spirit in the thunder, now those tidings are proclaimed that impart joy to all people.

This, as Cicero said of Rome, is the glory of all lands.

"Wisdom and knowledge are the stability of our times." All classes become sensible that knowledge is the guardian of property. In every place, they eagerly seek after that wisdom which as Isocrates says is the only imperishable treasure. Who can stay the progress of knowledge? You might as well think of erecting a tower whence you could grasp the Pleiades as to attempt to oppose the march of mind. To swell the tide of improvement, it is pleasing to reflect that men of the first talents are engaged, and that through the medium of those lectures, which, if they are not the fountains of knowledge, are important guides to them.

A word in praise of the Scandinavians. Like the Patriarch, they went in search of a region, they knew not where. We praise them for their courage —we applaud them for their zeal—we respect them for their motives; for they were anxious to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge. They reached the wished-for land,

> Where now the western sun,
> O'er fields, and floods, o'er every living soul
> Diffuseth glad repose.

The Scandinavians have opened to the view a broad region, where smiling hope invites successive generations from the old world.

Such men as Cæsar or a Tamerlane conquer but to devastate countries. Discoverers add new regions of fertility and beauty to those already known. And are not the hardy adventurers, ploughing the briny wave, more attractive than the troops of Alexander, marching to conquer the world, with plumes waving in the gentle breeze, with arms glittering in the sun-beams? Who can tell the benefits the former confer on mankind?

> To count them all demands a thousand tongues,
> A throat of brass and adamantine lungs.

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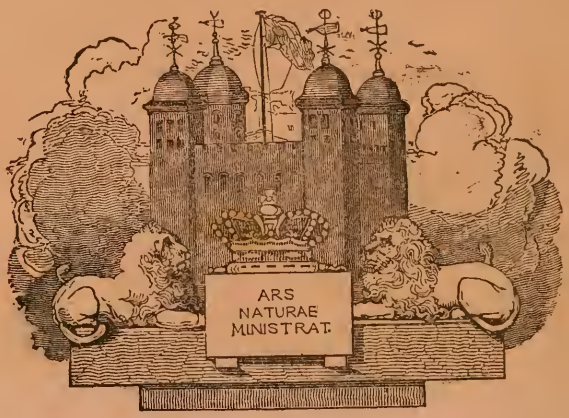

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